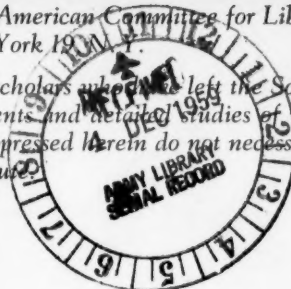


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No. 9, 1959/60

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Outline of Reference Paper On:

PARTY CONTROL AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST LOCALISM

Recent months have seen much publicity for Khrushchev's scheme to decentralize Soviet industry by taking many administrative functions out of the hands of the Ministry of State Planning in Moscow and turning them over to regional ministries or to individual local plant managers. But one should be careful not to see in this move any concession on the part of the Soviet regime to nationalist "survivals." On the contrary, Party control in industry is to be strengthened and further centralized.

Khrushchev himself made this point clear in a speech on July 1, 1959 to the plenary session of the Party Central Committee and Soviet publicity and propaganda sources have been echoing him ever since. The Soviet leaders are calling for especial vigilance against the tendency of local economic leaders to withhold for local use stocks of produce intended for "All-Union" (i. e. Central government) reserves and to hand out the better available jobs to natives of the prevailing local nationality, i. e. to fellow-Kazakhs, Latvians, Ukrainians, etc.

It may be necessary from the standpoint of productive efficiency for the Soviet authorities to encourage greater economic decentralization, but they obviously intend to keep the leading strings of Communist Party ideology and state control tighter than ever over the various peoples of the USSR, Russians and non-Russians alike.

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PARTY CONTROL AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST LOCALISM

In its October, 1959, issue, the Soviet philosophical journal, Voprosy Filosofii (Questions of Philosophy) published a leading article by V. Nikolayev entitled "The Growth of the Leading Role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the Period of the Construction of Communism on a Broad Scale." The chief purpose of this article was to justify the somewhat paradoxical theory that the Party is to acquire additional importance at a time when Soviet society is in the process of transition to Communism. The writer states:

The history of the development of the Soviet Union shows that, in the process of Socialist and Communist construction, the role of the Communist Party as the leading and organizing force in Soviet society is continually growing. This increase in the role of the Party in the development of society represents an objectively necessary and legitimate process (Voprosy Filosofii, Oct. 1959, p. 4)

The writer goes on to say that this "increase in the Party's leading role" will make itself felt primarily with regard to what are known in the USSR as "social" or "public" organizations; i. e. non-governmental bodies-- or, to put it more exactly, the Communist Party which is expected to be assigned many functions hitherto performed by the state.

Control Commissions to Counteract Economic Localism

A practical example of this projected increase in importance of the role to be played by the Party is the Central Committee's decision to create Party "Control Commissions" to supervise the work of those in charge of industrial enterprises. This decision was adopted shortly after Khrushchev had declared that:

We must intensify control in all branches of state, Party, economic and other organizations. . . The constitution of the Party states that Party organizations are endowed with the

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functions of controlling the work of the administration (i. e. the state organs-Editor). But it does not specify what this control should consist of and many Party organizations are making insufficient use of the right of control that has been given them. The time has now come when we must give this control organizational forms. (Pravda, July 2, 1959).

It is noteworthy that although this decision was adopted on June 26, 1959; i. e., on the third day of the Central Committee plenum, it was not published at the time and the public learned of its existence only on August 14, 1959, from an article by V. Churayev printed in Pravda. Evidently the Central Committee had become convinced during the first few days of its discussions that the re-equipment of Soviet industry could only be effected under close Party supervision. The path to this goal, however, is complicated by the existence of tendencies toward what Soviet propaganda terms "mestnichestvo," (localism), i. e., tendencies on the part of local Party organizations and industrial managements to favor economic autarky or self-sufficiency. The central leadership of the Party is now conducting a determined struggle against these tendencies. However, neither decrees of the Supreme Soviet nor repeated decisions and appeals by the Central Committee have succeeded so far in putting an end to such tendencies.

Khrushchev on Economic Leaders' "Selfishness"

In his speech delivered at the June plenum of the Central Committee, Khrushchev observed:

Certain economic leaders are not fulfilling on time their tasks in connection with the delivery of parts and materials to other economic councils. Certain workers ignore the interests of the state as a whole: they exceed their rights and functions, behave as though laws were not made for them and act according to the principle: "I do as I please" (Pravda, July 2, 1959).

Khrushchev stated that the heads of economic councils were arbitrarily lowering prices in their respective regions for food and industrial products, allowing the state to be cheated over grain deliveries, and allocating for local needs stocks intended for projects of importance to the entire state. A number of Soviet Republics, when parceling out produce collected on behalf of the state, were apportioning a negligible share to All-Union stocks and taking the lion's share for themselves:

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In the Kazakh SSR, the plan for state deliveries of meat products for the first half of the year had by June 1, 1959, been fulfilled to the extent of 111 per cent: the plan for deliveries to the all-Union stock had been fulfilled to the extent of 92 per cent. During the same period, the Ukrainian SSR fulfilled 95 per cent of its plan for meat procurement, delivered 47 per cent of the required quantity to the All-Union stock and 92.1 per cent (of the plan) for local needs (Ibid., July 2, 1959).

Publicity Against Localism

The article by Churayev, who is in charge of the Party press department of the Central Committee, makes it clear that the struggle waged by the Soviet leadership against tendencies toward decentralization--which often reflect aspirations to independence by the non-Russian nationalities-- is now in full swing. Writing under the heading, "State Interests Must Take First Place," Churayev declared:

In a Socialist economy, manifestations of localism, the arbitrary diversion to local needs of capital investments and material resources intended for the development of the most important branches of industry and construction, failing to make co-operative deliveries and other actions likely to cause serious harm to the interests of the state are intolerable. Cases of violation of state discipline also testify to the existence of serious shortcomings in the work of the Commission of Soviet control and of the State Prosecutors.

Four days later, on August 18, 1959, in an article entitled "In Favor of Local Interests," Pravda quoted instances of tendencies toward decentralization in the Latvian SSR and described how the Party Central Committee in that republic was compelling factories to produce "only products which remain within the (Latvian) Republic."

The question of localist tendencies and their connection with national aspirations was discussed by B. Gafurov in his paper, "The Construction of Communism and the Nationality Question," published in a symposium entitled Problems in the Construction of Communism in the USSR (Moscow, 1959). Gafurov writes:

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One of the manifestations of national-mindedness in particular areas of the National Republics (Editor's note: This is a reference to the non-Russian republics) is that of localist tendencies, which find expression in the non-fulfillment of plans for cooperative deliveries, in attempts by individual workers to seize as much as possible for their own Republics at the expense of other Republics, and in a parasitical, petty, consumer's approach to the question of financing the national economy.

Another evidence of localism in the non-Russian republics is the attempt of local agencies there to fill all responsible positions with candidates belonging to the predominating local nationality:

Certain comrades in the Union Republics have incorrectly interpreted these decisions of the Party and Government. In various places, a tendency has shown itself to give priority to cadres of the basic nationality over those of other nationalities (*Ibid.*).

The decidedly sharp tone of Churayev's article suggests that the subject of "state discipline" and the related problem of intensifying Party control may be discussed during the plenary session of the Party Central Committee scheduled to take place in December of this year.

Khrushchev on Control Commissions' Functions

In his speech quoted above, Khrushchev described the functions of the newly created "control commissions" as defined by the Central Committee Presidium:

The Presidium of the Central Committee has decided that it would be expedient to set up, within primary Party organizations in industrial and trade enterprises, commissions composed of Party members and candidate members with the aim of implementing the rights of organizations to control the work of the administration. The task of these commissions will be to exercise systematic control (to ensure) the timely fulfillment by enterprises of production tasks, state orders and deliveries of all types of products while maintaining a high quality of production: to ensure that all workers of the enterprise concerned adhere strictly to (the requirements of) state discipline: and to fight manifestations of localism and a narrow, bureaucratic outlook which are harmful to the interests of the state as a whole. They will be empowered to protest

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decisions made by the administration and to report to Party and Soviet (i. e. , governmental) bodies on illegal and incorrect actions, on decisions which conflict with the laws or rulings of Party and government. (Pravda, July 2, 1959).

Control Commissions have been and still are being established as a result of this decision by the Presidium. Each concentrates upon some particular aspect of the work of the enterprise concerned: the execution of state plans and deliveries; the proper realization of plans for automation and modernization of industrial processes; the improvement of the quality of output; or, finally, the reduction of production costs. The problem of localism is given especial attention (Partiinaya Zhizn, (Party Life), 1959, No. 19).

Difficulties of New System

During the few months in which the new commissions have been at work, their relations with the administrative authorities in the enterprises to which they belong have become extremely tense. In some cases, the Commissions try to nullify the functions of the administration: in others, senior officials of the enterprises concerned, including Party members, refuse to obey the demands of the commissions:

There are cases where members of commissions try to take over the functions of the administration, issuing instructions and thereby violating the principle of unified management (yedinonachalie). On the other hand, certain economic leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the proposals made by the commissions and fail to take effective measures in time ("We must improve the Forms and Methods of Party Control." Editorial, Pravda, August 3, 1959).

The harmful rift between the Party and the work of management, the desire to consider them as divorced from each other, cause harm to both the one and the other (Kommunist, 1959, No. 13).

It is interesting to compare the present state of affairs with that which obtained immediately after the October Revolution, when the directors of enterprises were specialists stemming from the old, pre-revolutionary

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intelligentsia who, on account of their political unreliability were placed under the supervision of Communist commissars who understood little or nothing about industry. Later, it became possible to insure unified management by appointing Communists as directors of enterprises. Now, however, these same directors are themselves being subjected to the control of "collective commissars," i. e., the Control commissions. A certain parallel may be seen in the reasons advanced for this type of dual control in the post-revolutionary period and now: then, industrial managers were usually suspect politically from the Party's point of view: now, having become members of the "New Class," they frequently become infected with localist tendencies or simply refuse to recognize the Party's right to rule.

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